

## First Breeding Record of the Cicadabird in the Northern Territory

The Cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris* occurs widely from South Sulawesi and Timor in eastern Indonesia, through northern and eastern Australia, to New Guinea and the Solomons. In the Northern Territory it is known to occur from Darwin in the west to Groote Eylandt in the east, and is separated from populations on Cape York by a gap of some 500 km (Blakers *et al.* 1984). Very little is known about this species in the Top End and there appear to be no published records of it breeding.

Over a period of nearly five years in the Darwin region, Crawford (1972) listed only six records of Cicadabirds, while McKean (1986) recorded them only nine times during ten years (1974-1984) of observations in the Sanderson Sewage Ponds area. Local habitats include paperbark (*Melaleuca* spp) woodlands, monsoon rainforests, mangals, and occasionally eucalypt forests (White 1917; Deignan 1964; Crawford 1972; Boekel 1976; McKean 1986). Noske (1996) recorded one or two pairs of the species each wet season over six years at his mangal site near Darwin, and suspected breeding in paperbarks fringing the landward edge of the mangal. Male Cicadabirds collected in November and January in Darwin had enlarged testes (McKean 1986). The species breeds mainly during the summer months in eastern Australia (Marchant 1979; Lavery 1986).

On 15 December 1997 RAN watched a male Cicadabird for 1 h in Yellow-barked Paperbark *Melaleuca nervosa* woodland surrounded by Darwin Woollybutt *Eucalyptus miniata*-dominated open forest, within the grounds of the Territory Wildlife Park, 40 km S of Darwin, where the species has been recorded regularly (D. Franklin pers. obs.). A female was seen only briefly, suggesting it was brooding on a nest. For about 5 min within this period the male repeatedly "dive-bombed" a Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasianus* perched 10 m above the ground in a eucalypt. On each occasion it flew between the tops of two trees about 30 m from the Coucal in opposite directions, giving a sharp alarm call as it almost touched the latter.

Returning to the site TAB and VB flushed a female Cicadabird, and after searching the immediate vicinity found a shallow nest typical of *Coracina* species. RAN climbed the nest-tree and sighted a single egg in the nest. Although only 6 m above the ground and placed on a horizontal fork of a Yellow-barked Paperbark, the nest was barely noticeable from eye-level. We believe this to be the first documented breeding record of the Cicadabird

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in the Northern Territory. Marchant (1979) noted that all published records of the clutch of this species are of one egg, and that only the female incubates.

## References

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RICHARD A. NOSKE<sup>1</sup>, TERRY A. BARNES<sup>2</sup> and VIOLA BARNES<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Science, Northern Territory University, Darwin, NT 0909,

<sup>2</sup>c/- Territory Wildlife Park, PO Box 771, Palmerston, NT 0831.